

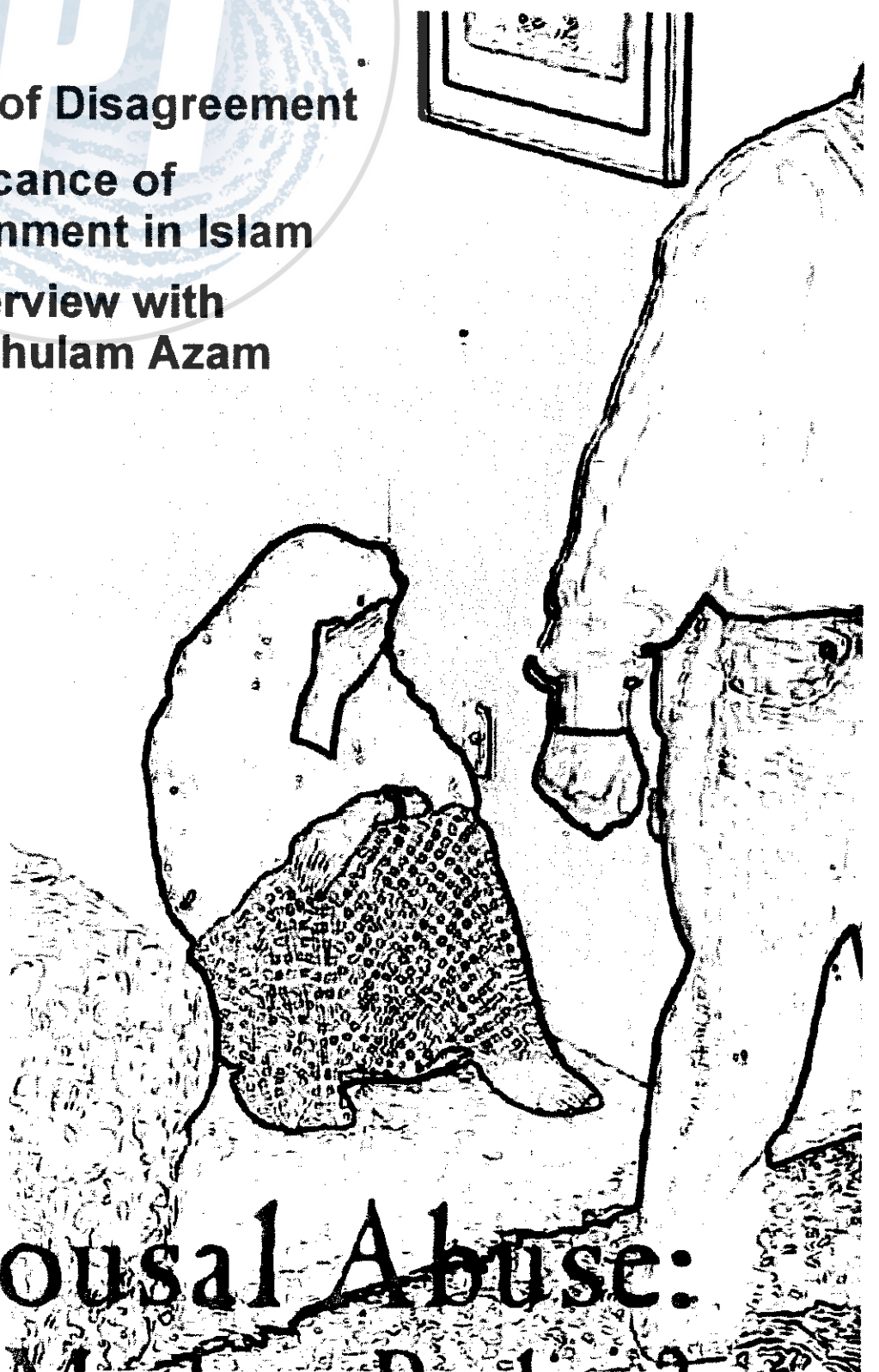
THE

Message

INTERNATIONAL

September 1999/Jumadi al-Thaani 14

- Ethics of Disagreement
- Significance of Environment in Islam
- An interview with Prof. Ghulam Azam



Spousal Abuse: Myth or Reality?

COR 100 DIV-1M 438C

MIXED ADC 209
349

\$2.5

Face To Face

IPT



By Zaheer Uddin

Q: You visited ICNA Convention as one of the Chief Guest speakers. How did you find the 24th ICNA Convention?

A: It was very inspiring. Ladies appeared to be in majority in my estimation. They were properly dressed. In this country to see ladies in Islamic dress in such a huge number was really a matter of encouragement for me. I felt it is depth of their involvement. They are working hard to remain Muslims and the result shows. Their work is very hopeful. Because of this movement the Muslims have been inspired to preserve their identity and to feel pride as Muslims. This kind of convention gives inspiration to the audience; they feel that they are not alone. So they easily protect themselves from frustration or inferiority complex. Instead they have sense of pride. When they hear from Islamic thinkers coming from various countries they are inspired that Islam is not confined to one country only; it is a universally and internationally recognized ideology. People from different countries, speaking different languages talk in the same tone. They consider that Islam is not only a religion but also a mode of life. Therefore, this type of conferences are very useful for advancement of Islamic ideology.

Q: You visited the US several times in the past. What kind of changes do you notice in the Islamic work, and particularly in ICNA's work.

A: I did not have a chance to compare so much. I came in 1995 and did not attend any big conference like this. As regards ICNA I felt from the conference that certainly it was a bigger gathering than previous ones. It is clear to me that ICNA is advancing. I find people from various countries, distinct colors and speaking different languages participating in this conference. It was quite impressive.

The writer is Secretary General of ICNA and Editor-in-Chief of The Message International.

Q: You have met ICNA leadership and also from ISNA, like Imam Siraj Wahaj, etc. How do you see the future of Islam and the Muslims in this country?

A: The concept of Islam is very clear. Huge literature is produced by Islamic thinkers all over the world. It is also available in English. The message of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah is the same and all the leaders think in the same way. As regards the concept of Islam, there is no difference. This is a great thing. But all these groups should be federated in one organization. There should be a national leadership. If national leadership grows then international Islamic movement will benefit more. This will enhance the cause of Islam. It will strengthen the Islamic community and a nationwide inspiration be created. And then it will pave the way for international unity. This is my feeling because the world has become very small. It is a global village. Unless, we think globally, it is impossible for Islam to rise as a superior force to dominate over other systems.

Q: You have met the leaders of different Islamic movements; they have also visited Bangladesh. How is the cooperation among the Islamic Movements?

A: Ideological support is there; mutual relations are very

good. Moral support is also there. But in order to make it effective there should be a global organization of the leaders. I think if any organization like that comes up, then they will be in a position to help the movements in all those countries where Muslims are in a majority. They can advise and help morally and materially also so that Islamic movements come to power in various Islamic countries. For example, there are three countries where government claims to be Islamic. Had there been an international federation or confederation of Islamic movements they could be in a position to help each other. If the leaders of Islamic movements unite and make an international body and visit these three countries and try to exemplify Islam, it will be a great help. They can show the loopholes and give their suggestions or help them solve problems. They will succeed in exhibiting real Islam in political, economic and other spheres. This will help smaller movements to rise in other countries.

Q: Why are they not united? How can they be united?

A: There have been efforts for this. To call leaders from all over the world to meet together requires huge funds. Unless a resourceful government is behind such a move, it is very difficult. Those countries that are in a position to arrange such type of conferences have no interest in them. Those that are willing to organize these are not so rich. It requires long deliberations. Unfortunately, at present no Muslim country is suitable for this kind of gathering. But it is possible in America or Britain where there is freedom. There must be an initiative for it. In Pakistan Jama'at-e Islami took the initiative last year but it could not advance as expected. This year, Pakistan Jama'at is thinking to organize provincial conferences and on that occasion it intends to invite many leaders from Islamic countries.

Q: You mentioned three Islamic countries. Would you mention those three?

A: They are Sudan, Afghanistan, and Iran.

Q: 1.2 billion strong Muslims who are spread from Indonesia to Morocco have almost no say in the world affairs or in their own lands. How do you think the

Muslim could rise again?

A: There are over 40 Muslim majority states where governments are run by Muslims. But they are hereditary Muslims, and not Muslims by conviction. If these 40 countries become really Islamic then the situation will be different. The percentage of practicing Muslims is very low. Then there are organizations like OIC which is also ineffective due to deep differences among the members.

Q: Is there a hope in the near future of a leadership that you are referring to?

A: It is not possible to make any prophecy about it. We can only hope and expect. If Muslim countries sincerely implement the Makkah Declaration of 1981 in which they committed to introduce Islamic system of education and Sharia, soon a new generation of Muslim leaders will emerge. The hope is that they will take the leadership role and bring the areas inhabited by the Muslim Ummah into the global focus. Islamic movements in many of these countries are trying to put pressure on the rulers to take their commitment to Islam seriously.

Q: Alhamdulillah, Jama'at-e Islami Bangladesh has been very active and yet it seems Jama'at is not close in achieving its goal. Is there any thing wrong in Jama'at's strategy, or the people are not ready?

A: Pakistan was created in the name of Islam. Even its constitution clearly declares it as an Islamic state. In spite of that Islamic movements are not in a position to bring the needed changes in the polity. Bangladesh was created in the name of secularism, socialism, and Bengali nationalism. It is more difficult there than Pakistan to work for Islam. In spite of that Islamic movement is a great force in Bangladesh. Nobody has the courage to speak against Islam openly. In some newspapers, or on the university campuses some dare to challenge but not in public.

Those writers who write against Islam or the Prophet(s) cannot stay there. I think secular forces are not the problem in Bangladesh. Instead, the Islamic forces themselves are part of the problem. Muslims in Bangladesh get their

Islam from the Imam of the Mosques, and the Ulema who are running the Madrasas. There are a large number Pirs and Mashaekh to whom people go in thousands. When Jama'at-e Islam said that Islam is not only a religion but a complete code of life then people went to them and asked about Jama'at-e Islami's ideas and concerns. As these Imams and Mashaekh themselves did not feel that there should be Allah's rule in all walks of life it was very difficult for the illiterate people to agree with us. Alhamdulillah during last two decades, a number of new Islamic organizations are formed. Even those Ulema who earlier did not consider politics as Islamic work now agree with us. Since the emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan, Ulema in Bangladesh are also inspired. Now slogans like Bangla Hobe Afghan. Amra shob Taliban are not uncommon. If these people come to the front and speak of Qur'anic law, I think merger of these Islamic parties will result. Islamic Khilafa party, Nizame Islam, Islamic Movement of Bangladesh, Islamic Andolon are a few of them. In Tablighi Jama'at about half million people gather in their annual conference. Even the President, the Prime Minister, and leaders of opposition join the congregation for though these parties are secular. It means that religion is a force in Bangladesh and political parties recognize it. I do not know how much time is needed but gradually they are coming closer to the Islamic movement.

Q: In the previous parliament Jama'at had 18 members. Now its strength is reduced to two or three. What was the reason of such a decline?

A: There were three major reasons. 1991 election was the fairest ever held in the country. Unfortunately 1996 elections were not fair at all. The head of the caretaker government had political ambitions and among his advisers were politically affiliated and ideologically anti-Islamic people. Chief Election Commissioner was a man of Awami League. NGOs also played havoc. They told the women who received funds through them not to vote for Jama'at or their funding will be cut. In the last two elections the candidates and their agents went door to door with envelopes containing 100 to 5000 Takas. Even our supporters said how could they betray after receiving a gift. Betrayal is a sin

Some said they vote for our candidate but get no return. At least the other candidate has given something.

Q: You mentioned NGO's influence in Bangladesh. How about the Indian lobby?

A: There are parties and leaders who are secular and naturally pro-Indian. It is very easy for India to influence these groups. A number of national dailies are funded by the Indian money. More than a dozen daily newspaper from Dhaka are pro-India. One of them is published from five places simultaneously. Not even well established popular dailies were ever published from more than one place. These papers are continuously working for India, for secularism, against Islam, Islamic movement, Madrasas, and Islamic education. Moreover, market has become open to Indian cheap products. Bangladesh industries can't compete with Indian multinationals.

Q: You mentioned new Islamic organizations formed after the Taliban and Afghan Jihad. What kind of relation Jama'at has with these groups and organizations?

A: Tabligh group always says that they have no need to join or cooperate with others. As regards other Islamic forces, they are not united. But since they came in politics they have realized who are real enemies of Islam. We are trying to convince them that even if we can't come to one platform let us launch a simultaneous movement on Islamic issues. They agree, but we have not started as yet.

Q: What are the hopes and expectation in terms of Jama'at-e Islami getting the helms of the affairs of Bangladesh?

What are your predictions?

A: It is impossible to make any prediction. I am satisfied that all Muslims are now convinced that Islam is a complete code of life. Ideologically, nobody directly oppose us. You will find huge number of highly educated people working for Islam. It is also a great achievement. Many Ulema, have also joined our movement. But secular anti-Islamic

forces are very powerful and India is taking direct interest in Bangladesh. It has already divided our people into "pro-liberation" and "anti-liberation". Those who fought for Bangladesh like Major Jaleel or born after 1971 are also branded "anti-liberation" simply because they speak of Islam. Some seriously fear that this enmity will lead to a civil war. If Bangladesh is saved from the civil war then Insh-Allah, Islam will rise. In meetings I emphasize that we are Bengali no doubt by language, Bangladeshi as a political identity and Muslim as regards nationhood. People accept it.

Q: Do you have any message for our readers and ICNA workers?

A: The message is to spread your work. Disseminate Islam to all people. It should be the mission of all Muslims. If you conveyed Allah's word to all the humanity Islam will rise. I congratulate ICNA workers and also other Islamic organizations and readers of the Message and urge them to double their speed. ■

Cont'd from page 35

US Policy In Central Asia

undermine the American plan to control pricing through multiple export competition (a plan which will serve also to divide Arab and Asian Muslim populations), and would make US presence in Central Asia effectively impotent. Likewise, a union between a potential supplementary energy resource and an actual primary one, would discourage the United States from engaging in any act of aggression which might endanger the friendship with its major oil suppliers. The hope, then, is that the Muslims of Central Asia will hold fast to their re-discovered religion, and resist the imposition of Western secularism, maintain control over their own resources, and build societies and institutions consistent with their traditionally Islamic culture, and that the international Muslim community will be prepared to assist and defend them to ensure their victory. ■

Please subscribe to, and advertise
in The Message International
Tel: (718) 658-5163
E-mail: Message@ICNA.Org

ISLAM FASHION INC.

300 E. 95th Street, New York, NY 10128
We carry most of Muslim's clothes and •Silver
•Gilbab •Nikab •Scarf •Hejab •Islamic Books
•Ladies and Boys Clothes
•Islamic Stuff and more

Open Mon.-Sat. 11AM. - 8:30 PM.
• Sun. 11 AM. - 7 PM.
Tel: (212) 828-2249
•Telefax: (212) 828-2248

10% Discount with this coupon. One
coupon per purchase. Limited time only